Methods For Community Engagement: The Quartier Vert Approach in NDG

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Research Aims:
How can community-based planning processes be designed in a way that fosters community engagement while also influencing the official planning process? The “Quartier vert, actif et en santé (QVAS)” project, initiated by the Urban Ecology Centre of Montreal (UECM), offers an opportunity to explore this question. The QVAS project, now in its second cycle, seeks via a collaborative and community oriented process, to encourage better planning and design for active transportation in four Montreal neighbourhoods. In 2010-2011 one of the two QVAS pilot projects was carried out in south-eastern NDG, including the Saint-Raymond neighbourhood. Using this pilot project as a case this research project included the following objectives:

- Situate the QVAS model in the body of literature concerning participatory and community planning
- Explore and provide a critical assessment of the methods used in the QVAS participatory component of the process
- Determine the effectiveness of the QVAS project in fostering community engagement and developing community capacity for the model’s use in future participatory planning endeavours

Summary, Activities and Methods Used in the QVAS Three Phase Planning Process

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase I Community Profile</th>
<th>Phase II Exploring Solutions</th>
<th>Phase III Validation and Decision Making</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Research of documentation</td>
<td>• Professional workshops bringing together experts from diverse fields including urban planning, landscape architecture and community engagement</td>
<td>• Public meeting involving representatives from community organizations, the borough residents and other community stakeholders</td>
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<td>• Field survey</td>
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<td>• Participatory activities including an online survey, interactive walks, public meetings, exploratory walks, and community visioning exercises</td>
<td>• Field survey</td>
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Conclusions:

- One of the strongest aspects of the QVAS model is the nature of participation that goes beyond traditional consultation and generates genuine active participation, giving residents the tools and the opportunity to have a voice in the future of their community.
- Difficulty in mobilizing sufficient representation of the highly diverse community of Saint-Raymond reveals the need to further adapt the process to cater to residents from diverse backgrounds.
- A detailed study including residents who participated in the QVAS would provide further insight into the impacts and success of the model.

Next steps:

- Pursue a study of citizens’ perceptions of the QVAS model in a supervised research study as part of a master’s degree requirement.